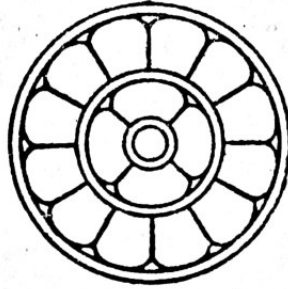




Sri Aurobindo - as professor at Baroda
(From 1893 - 1900)

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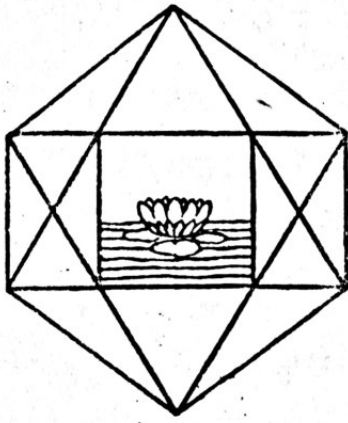


Sri Aurobindo has come to tell the world the beauty of the future which should realize itself.

He has come to give not a hope but the certitude of the splendour towards which the world is moving. This world is not an unhappy accident, it is a marvel which is moving towards its expression.

The world has a need of a certitude of the future beauty and Sri Aurobindo has given this assurance.

The Mother



All India Magazine

—Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face.

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‘MOTHER WISDOM WORKS’

A Mother wisdom works in Nature's breast
To pour delight on the heart of toil and want
And press perfection on life's stumbling powers,
Impose heaven-sentience on the obscure abyss
And make dumb Matter conscious of its God.
Although our fallen minds forget to climb,
Although our human stuff resists or breaks,
She keeps her will that hopes to divinise clay;
Failure cannot repress, defect o'erthrow;
Time cannot weary her nor the Void subdue,
The ages have not made her passion less;
No victory she admits of Death or Fate.
Always she drives the souls to new attempt;
Always her magical infinitude
Forces to aspire the inert brute elements;
As one who has all infinity to waste,
She scatters the seed of the Eternal's strength
On a half-animate and crumbling mould,
Plants heaven's delight in the heart's passionate mire,
Pours godhead's seekings into a bare beast frame,
Hides immortality in a mask of death.
Once more that Will put on an earthly shape.

Savitri: Book IV Canto One

THE PURSUIT OF MAN

Almost all men normally devote the major part of their energy to the life on earth, to the terrestrial needs, interests, desires, ideals of the individual and the race. It could not be otherwise ; for the care of the body, the sufficient development and satisfaction of the vital and mental being of man, the pursuit of high individual and large collective ideals which start from the idea of an attainable human perfection or nearer approach to perfection through his normal development, are imposed upon us by the very character of our terrestrial being ; they are part of its law, its natural impulse and rule, its condition of growth, and without these things man could not attain to his full manhood. Any view of our being which neglects, unduly belittles or intolerantly condemns them, is therefore by that very fact, whatever its other truth or merit or utility, or whatever its suitability to individuals of a certain temperament or in a certain stage of spiritual evolution, unfit to be the general and complete rule of human living. Nature takes good care that the race shall not neglect these aims which are a necessary part of her evolution ; for they fall within the method and stages of the divine plan in us, and a vigilance for her first steps and for the maintenance of their mental and material ground is a preoccupation which she cannot allow to go into the background, since these things belong to the foundation and body of her structure.

But also she has implanted in us a sense that there is something in our composition which goes beyond this first terrestrial nature of humanity. For this reason the race cannot accept or follow for a very long time any view of being which ignores this higher and subtler sense and labours to confine us entirely to a purely terrestrial way of living. The intuition of a beyond, the idea and feeling of a soul and spirit in us which is other than the mind, life and body or is greater, not limited by their formula returns upon us and ends by resuming possession. The ordinary man satisfies this sense easily enough by devoting to it his exceptional moments or the latter part of his life when age shall have blunted the zest of his earthly nature, or by recognising it as something behind or above his normal action to which he can more or less imperfectly direct his natural being : the exceptional man turns to the sup-raterrestrial as the one aim and law of living and diminishes or mortifies as much as possible his earthly parts in the hope of developing his celestial nature. There have been epochs in which the sup-raterrestrial view has gained a very powerful hold and there has been a vacillation between an imperfect human living which cannot take its large natural expansion and a sick ascetic longing for the celestial life which also does not acquire in more than a few its best pure and happy movement. This is a sign of the creation of some false war in the being

by the setting up of a standard or a device that ignores the law of evolutionary capacity or an over-stress that misses the reconciling equation which must exist somewhere in a divine dispensation of our nature.

But, finally, there must open in us, as our mental life deepens and subtler knowledge develops, the perception that the terrestrial and the supraterrrestrial are not the only terms of being; there is something which is supracosmic and the highest remote origin of our existence. This perception is easily associated by spiritual enthusiasm, by the height and ardour of the soul's aspiration, by the philosophic aloofness or the strict logical intolerance of our intellect, by the eagerness of our will or by a sick disgust in our vital being discouraged by the difficulties or disappointed by the results of life,—by any or all of these motive-forces,—with a sense of the entire vanity and unreality of all else than this remote Supreme, the vanity of human life, the unreality of cosmic existence, the bitter ugliness and cruelty of earth, the insufficiency of heaven, the aimlessness of the repetition of births in the body. Here again the ordinary man cannot really live with these ideas; they can only give at most a greyness and restless dissatisfaction to the life in which he must still continue: but the exceptional man abandons all to follow the truth he has seen and for him they can be the needed food of his spiritual impulse or a stimulus

to the one achievement that is now for him the one thing that matters.

A spiritual evolution, an unfolding here of the Being within from birth to birth, of which man becomes the central instrument and human life at its highest offers the critical turning-point, is the link needed for the reconciliation of life and spirit; for it allows us to take into account the total nature of man and to recognise the legitimate place of his triple attraction, to earth, to heaven and to the supreme Reality. But a complete solution of its oppositions can be arrived at only on this basis that the lower consciousness of mind, life and body cannot arrive at its full meaning until it is taken up, restated, transformed by the light and power and joy of the higher spiritual consciousness, while the higher too does not stand in its full right relation to the lower by mere rejection, but by this assumption and domination; this taking up of its unfulfilled values, this restatement and transformation,—a spiritualising and supramentalising of the mental, vital and physical nature. The terrestrial ideal, which has been so powerful in the modern mind, restored man and his life on earth and the collective hope of the race to a prominent position and created an insistent demand for a solution; this is the good it has accomplished. But by overdoing and exclusiveness it unduly limited man's scope, it ignored that which is the highest and in the end the largest thing in him,

and by this limitation it missed the full pursuit of its own object. If mind were the highest thing in man and Nature, then indeed this frustration might not result; still, the limitation of scope would be there, a narrow possibility, a circumscribed prospect. But if mind is only a partial unfolding of consciousness and there are powers beyond of which Nature in our race is capable, then not only does our hope upon earth, let alone what is beyond it, depend upon their development, but this becomes the one proper road of our evolution.

Sri Aurobindo

Spirit is the crown of universal existence; Matter is its basis; Mind is the link between the two. Spirit is that which is eternal; Mind and Matter are its workings. Spirit is that which is concealed and has to be revealed; mind and body are the means by which it seeks to reveal itself. Spirit is the image of the Lord of the Yoga; mind and body are the means He has provided for reproducing that image in phenomenal existence. All Nature is an attempt at a progressive revelation of the concealed Truth, a more and more successful reproduction of the divine image.

Sri Aurobindo

‘A LAMP WAS LIT’

Then Spring, an ardent lover, leaped through leaves
And caught the earth-bride in his eager clasp;
His advent was a fire of irised hues,
His arms were a circle of the arrival of joy.

*

*

The life of the enchanted globe became
A storm of sweetness and of light and song,
A revel of colour and of ecstasy,
A hymn of rays, a litany of cries :
A strain of choral priestly music sang
And, swung on the swaying censer of the trees,
A sacrifice of perfume filled the hours.

*

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In this high signal moment of the gods
Answering earth's yearning and her cry for bliss
A greatness from our other countries came.

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A lamp was lit, a sacred image made.
A mediating ray has touched the earth
Bridging the gulf between man's mind and God's;
Translating heaven into a human shape
Its brightness linked our transience to the Unknown.
A spirit of its celestial source aware
Descended into earth's imperfect mould
And wept not fallen to mortality,
But looked on all with large and tranquil eyes.

Savitri : Book IV Canto One

EARTH A FIELD OF EVOLUTION

All the consciousness in the human being who is the mental embodied in living Matter has to rise so as to meet the higher consciousness; the higher consciousness has also to descend into mind, into life, into Matter. In that way the barriers will be removed and the higher consciousness will be able to take up the whole lower nature and transform it by the power of the supermind.

The earth is a material field of evolution. Mind and Life, Supermind, Sachchidananda are in principle involved there in the earth-consciousness; but only matter is at first organised; then life descends from the life-plane and gives shape and organisation and activity to the life principle in Matter, creates the plant and animal; then mind descends from the mind plane, creating man. Now Supermind is to descend so as to create a supramental race.

Sri Aurobindo

THE SPIRITUAL URGE

Man's urge towards spirituality is the inner driving of the spirit within him towards emergence, the insistence of the Consciousness-Force of the being towards the next step of its manifestation. It is true that the spiritual urge has been largely other-worldly or turned at its extreme towards a spiritual negation and self-annihilation of the mental individual; but this is only one side of its tendency maintained and made dominant by the necessity of passing out of the kingdom of the fundamental Inconscience overcoming the obstacles of the body, casting away the obscure vital, getting rid of the ignorant mentality, the necessity to attain first and foremost, by a rejection of all these impediments to spiritual being, to a spiritual status. The other, the dynamic side of the spiritual urge has not been absent, — the aspiration to a spiritual mastery and mutation of Nature, to a spiritual perfection of the being, a divinisation of the mind, the heart and the very body: there has even been the dream or a psychic prevision of a fulfilment exceeding the individual transformation, a new earth and heaven, a city of God, a divine descent upon earth, a reign of the spiritually perfect, a kingdom of God not only within us but outside, in a collective human life. However obscure may have been some of the forms taken by this aspiration, the indication they contain of the urge of the occult spiritual being within to emergence in earth-nature is unmistakable.

If a spiritual unfolding on earth is the hidden truth of our birth into Matter, if it is fundamentally an evolution of consciousness that has been taking place in Nature, then man as he is cannot be the last term of that evolution: he is too imperfect an expression of the spirit, mind itself a too limited form and instrumentation; mind is only a middle term of consciousness, the mental being can only be a transitional being. If, then, man is incapable of exceeding mentality, he must be surpassed and supermind and superman must manifest and take the lead of the creation. But if his mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it, then there is no reason why man himself should not arrive at supermind and supermanhood or at least lend his mentality, life and body to an evolution of that greater term of the Spirit manifesting in Nature.

Sri Aurobindo

‘ AT LAST HE WAKES ’

A demi-god animal, came thinking man.
He wallows in mud, yet heavenward soars in thought;
He plays and ponders, laughs and weeps and dreams,
Satisfies his little longings like the beast;
He pores upon life's book with student eyes.
Out of this tangle of intellect and sense,
Out of the narrow scope of finite thought
At last he wakes into spiritual mind;
A high liberty begins and luminous room:
He glimpses eternity, touches the infinite,
He meets the gods in great and sudden hours,
He feels the universe as his larger self,
Makes space and time his opportunity
To join the heights and depths of being in light,
In the heart's cave speaks secretly with God.

Savitri: Book X Canto Four

THE SECRET OF NATURE

From the beginning Sri Aurobindo tells us that hidden in the depth, at the centre of Matter there is the Divine Presence and that the whole earthly evolution is made to prepare the return of creation to its origin, to this divine Presence which is at the centre of everything. That is the intention of Nature.

The universe is an objectification of the Supreme, as though He objectifies Himself out of Himself in order to see Himself, to live Himself, to know Himself and in order that there may be an existence and a consciousness capable of recognising Him as its origin and uniting with Him consciously to manifest Him in the Becoming. The universe has no other reason. The earth is a kind of symbolic crystallisation of universal life, a reduction, a concentration so that the work of evolution becomes more easy to do and to follow. And if you look at the history of the earth, you can understand why the universe has been created. It is the Supreme who becomes conscious of Himself in an eternal Becoming; and the goal is a union of what has been created with the Creator, a conscious, voluntary and free union in the Manifestation.

That is the secret of Nature. Nature is the executive Force, it is she who does the work. She takes up this creation which is apparently wholly

inconscient, but which contains the Supreme Consciousness and the unique Reality, and she labours so that all this may grow, become aware of itself and realise itself fully.

But she does not show it from the beginning. Things develop little by little and that is why in the beginning it is a secret, which will unveil itself towards the end. And man has reached a point where the evolution is sufficient for the secret unveiled and that what was being done in an apparent unconsciousness may be done consciously, voluntarily and therefore much more rapidly and in the joy of realisation.

In man one can see that the spiritual Reality is already growing and that it will express itself totally and freely whereas earlier in man and the plant, to be able to see that one needed to be a good clairvoyant. Man is himself conscious of the spiritual Reality, at least in the higher parts of his human life; he has begun to know what the supreme origin requires of him and he is collaborating in its execution.

Nature wants creation to become aware that it is the Creator Himself who objectifies Himself, that is to say, there is no difference between the Creator and the Creation and the goal is a conscious and realised union. That is Nature's secret.

The Mother

NATURE'S SUPREME AIM

Nature, then, being an evolution or progressive self-manifestation of an eternal and secret existence, with three successive forms as her three steps of ascent, we have as the condition of all our activities these three mutually interdependent possibilities, the bodily life, the mental existence and the veiled spiritual being which is in the involution the cause of the others and in the evolution their result. Preserving and perfecting the physical fulfilling the mental, it is Nature's aim and it should be ours to unveil in the perfected body and mind the transcendent activities of the Spirit. As the mental life does not abrogate but works for the elevation and better utilisation of the bodily, so too the spiritual should not abrogate but transfigure our intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and vital activities.

For man, the head of terrestrial Nature, the sole earthly frame in which her full evolution is possible, is a triple birth. He has been given a living frame in which the body is the vessel and life the dynamic means of a divine manifestation. His activity is centred in a progressive mind which aims at perfecting itself as well as the house in which it dwells and the means of life that uses, and is capable of awaking by a progressive self-realisation to its own true nature as a form of the Spirit. He culminates in what he always really was, the illumined and beatific

spirit which is intended at last to irradiate life and mind with its now concealed splendours.

Since this is the plan of the divine Energy in humanity, the whole method and aim of our existence must work by the interaction of these three elements in the being. As a result of their separate formulation in Nature, man has open to him a choice between three kinds of life, the ordinary material existence, a life of mental activity and progress and the unchanging spiritual beatitude. But he can, as he progresses, combine these three forms, resolve their discords into a harmonious rhythm and so create in himself the whole godhead, the perfect Man.

In ordinary Nature they have each their own characteristic and governing impulse.

The characteristic energy of bodily Life is not so much in progress as in persistence, not so much in individual self-enlargement as in self-repetition. There is, indeed, in physical Nature a progression from type to type, from the vegetable to the animal, from the animal to man; for even in inanimate Matter Mind is at work. But once a type is marked off physically, the chief immediate preoccupation of the terrestrial Mother seems to be to keep it in being by a constant reproduction. For life always seeks immortality; but since individual form is impermanent and only the idea of a form is permanent in the consciousness that creates the universe,—for there it does not perish,—such constant reproduction is the

only possible material immortality. Self-preservation, self repetition, self-multiplication are necessarily, then, the predominant instincts of all material existence.

The characteristic energy of pure Mind is change and the more it acquires elevation and organisation, the more this law of Mind assumes the aspect of a continual enlargement, improvement and better arrangement of its gains and so of a continual passage from a smaller and simpler to a larger and more complex perfection. For mind, unlike bodily life, is infinite in its field, elastic in its expansion, easily variable in its formations. Change, then, self-enlargement and self-improvement are its proper instincts. Its faith is perfectibility, its watchword is progress.

The characteristic law of Spirit is self-existent perfection and immutable infinity. It possesses always and in its own right the immortality which is the goal of Mind. The attainment of the eternal and the realisation of that which is the same in all things and beyond all things, equally blissful in universe and outside it, untouched by the imperfections and limitations of the forms and activities in which it dwells, are the glory of the spiritual life.

In each of these forms Nature acts both individually and collectively; for the Eternal affirms Himself equally in the single form and in the group-existence, whether family, clan and nation or grou-

pings dependent on less physical principle or the supreme group of all, our collective humanity. Man also may seek his own individual good from any or all of these spheres of activity, or indentify himself in them with the collectivity and live for it, or, rising to a truer perception of this complex universe, harmonise the individual realisation with the collective aim. For as it is the right relation of the soul with the Supreme, while it is in the universe, neither to assert egoistically its separate being nor to blot itself out in the Indefinable, but to realise its unity with the Divine and the world and unite them in the individual, so the right relation of the individual with the collectivity is neither to pursue egoistically his own material or mental progress or spiritual salvation without regard to his fellows, nor for the sake of the community to suppress or maim his proper development, but to sum up in himself all his best and completest possibilities and pour them out by thought, action and all other means on his surroundings so that the whole race may approach nearer to the attainment of its supreme personalities.

Sri Aurobindo

ASPIRATION FOR THE WONDERFUL

If instead of a slow evolution there appeared suddenly something belonging to the supramental world, that can be called a miracle by man the mental being, because it would be the intervention of something which he does not have consciously in himself and which intervenes in his conscious life. And in fact, if you look at this taste for miracles, which is very strong—much more strong in children and in hearts that have remained childlike than in high mentalised beings—you find it is the faith in the realisation of the aspiration for the Wonderful, of something higher than anything that one can expect from the normal life.

Indeed, in education one ought always to encourage the two parallel tendencies. The tendency of thirsting for the Wonderful, for that which seems unrealisable, something which fills you with the feeling of divinity. At the same time, while one looks at the world as it is, one should encourage exact, correct, sincere observation, elimination of all imagination, constant control, a most practical, most meticulous sense for the exactness of details. Both must move parallel. Generally you kill one with the idea that it is necessary to increase the other—it is altogether an error. The two can be simultaneous and there is a moment when one has sufficient knowledge to perceive that they are the two aspects

of the same thing and that is clairvoyance, higher discernment. Instead of a limited seeing and discernment, the discernment, becomes altogether sincere, correct, exact, but it is vast, it includes a whole domain that does not yet belong to concrete Manifestation.

From the point of view of education, it would be very important.

To see the world as it is exactly crudely, in the most earthly and concrete manner and to see the world as it can be with a vision most free, most high, full to the utmost of hope and aspiration and a wonderful certitude are like the two poles of discernment. Whatever we can conceive as the most marvellous, the most powerful, the the most expressive, the most entire is nothing in comparison with what it can be and at the same time our minutest exactitude in detail is never sufficiently exact. And the two must go together...

And this is the best possible use of miracles. The need for miracles is a gesture of ignorance: "Oh I would like it to be so!" It is a gesture of ignorance and impotence. And those who say, "You live in miracles", know only the end that is below—even then they know that only imperfectly—and have no contact with the other.

This need for the miracle must be changed into a conscious aspiration towards something which is already there, which exists and which will be mani-

fested *by the help of* all these aspirations—all these aspirations are necessary or if one looks at them in a truer way, an accompaniment—a pleasant accompaniment—in the eternal unfolding.

Indeed people with a very strict logic tell you, “Why do you pray? Why do you aspire? Why do you ask? The Lord does what He wants and he will do what He wants”. Of course it is so, there is no need to say, that, but this urge: “O Lord, manifest thyself!” gives an intenser vibration to His manifestation.

Otherwise, He would not have made the world such as it is—there is a special power, a special delight, a special vibration in the intensity of the world’s aspiration to become again what it is.

And it is for that—“for that”, partly, fragmentarily—there is an evolution.

A universe eternally perfect, manifesting eternally the eternal perfection will miss the joy of progress.

The Mother